Interview with Maury D. Brown

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An interview with Maury D. Brown

Interviewed by: W. Haven North

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Q: How many years have you been associated with the AID?

BROWN: Almost 37 years.

Q: You started when?

BROWN: 1961.

Q: 1961 and you retired when?

BROWN: In January of 1998.

Q: This year?

BROWN: It was this year, three months ago.

Q: Let's go back to your early days? Where did you grow up and where did you go to school?Early Years and Education

BROWN: I grew up in Erie, Pennsylvania. Actually, if I had something that I really did where I grew up it was music. I was interested in being a musician. My parents wanted

me to be a lawyer, so I had to compromise and ended up going to Syracuse University to study pre law. I had a Dean in Harlan Cleveland who later became an Assistant Secretary of State. And, Dean Cleveland, one day at a cocktail party that they were having at the Maxwell School where I was going to classes my Sophomore year in college, got a hold of me and started talking about government service. I had a tremendous interest in geography and in the world itself. At that point, he convinced me that the best thing to do was to be a government civil servant and to study international relations and to go into some aspect of international relations. I dropped my decision of being a lawyer and decided to focus and study international relations.

Q: Were there any particular geographic emphases or studies?

BROWN: Well, I tell you, it was probably Russian studies. I had a professor that I really liked, Wladimir Kulski, who was a former Polish diplomat. I took two or three classes from Dr. Kulski and so really my focus at that time was on the Soviet Union and the whole eastern block more than the rest of the world. Russia at that time was sending up Sputnik and there were all kinds of interesting things that were happening with the U.S. and Russia. We had just finished the McCarthy Era and that seemed to be the focus in the world on relations in the Cold War so that took my interest. When I was accepted to N.Y.U. for graduate school, I'd been accepted to several schools. Michigan State was another and I felt that I wanted to be near the U.N. if I couldn't go to school in Washington, then my second choice was New York just to be near the U.N. NYU didn't have an international relations focus, so I studied political science. I took courses in international law at the Law School of N.Y.U. and I focused probably more on inter cultural relations there. My master's thesis was on multi culturalism in Israel and how the various political parties represented the many cultural factions. People were coming in from eastern Europe who were professors and scientists and highly educated people. There were other people coming in from Morocco and from Yemen who barely knew how to read and write. All of these cultures have to be fused in some way. Actually, the political system divided it more and the army integrated it more. That was very interesting to me, how cultures relate to

one another was really my focus. While I was in New York I did get an interview at the U.N. The only U.S. government agency to talk to me at all was the CIA. They offered me a position when I was just about finishing my master's degree, but it was a kind of research analyst who would analyze the industrial sector of the Soviet Union. They told me that the best part about it was that I would work from midnight until eight in the morning, and be able to go to the monuments and the museums during the day. That was not my preference and so I turned that job down. I did come to Washington and try to get a position at the Pentagon with the Office of International Security Affairs, but when I finished my graduate work, the Army took me. I had to serve six months in the reserves and the position wasn't going to stay at the Pentagon. So, I spent six months in the Army and came to Washington.

Joined ICA in management planning - 1961

The first day I was in Washington I had three interviews. One was with the Bureau of the Budget, another was with USIA and the third was with International Cooperation Agency (ICA) The USIA and ICA both, that first day, offered me a position. So, that Monday night I had a decision to make, whether I wanted to go to USIA and work in their management intern program or come to ICA and work in the Office of Management Planning, which was what was offered. There was a man named Art Hughes who was the person who interviewed me. I was very impressed with Art Hughes. There were a bunch of others. I can't remember all their names, but I liked the group and so I accepted the job at ICA.

Q: This was when?

BROWN: This was in May of 1961. I actually started work in June of 1961. As soon as I started, ICA was abolished. The ICA and the Development Loan Fund were combined into AID. It was a very interesting time. I had just started working there and people were let go. What they did was something called Stassenization. Everybody was fired and some were re-hired. The ones they wanted to keep were re-hired, the ones they didn't want were just

gone. They had no recourse, they had no service rights at all. So, there was a lot of turmoil going around during that period of time. I wasn't worried, because they had just hired me and I didn't think that I had done enough bad things.

Q: You were Civil Service?

BROWN: I was Civil Service, yes. But, what they wanted from me was not what I thought they wanted. They wanted me to program computers and my background had nothing to do with computers. I know nothing about math, nothing about science and to me, all of that was very technical and scientific. So, I reacted very badly. I thought I'd get a shock or electrocuted if I went in to the computer room. But, they sent me off to school at IBM and taught me how to write a computer program. I came back and they said, “Well, why don't you just write one program and then we'll put you back up in Management Planning where you can work in your area.” I wrote the program and it worked and everybody got all excited that the first program worked and said, “Why don't you write another program?”

Q: What kind of programs were these?

BROWN: These were accounting programs. There was a man named John Strand who was working with the Peace Corps. At that time, AID had a contract with the Peace Corps to provide administrative services to the Peace Corps. We provided them management analysis, computer support, and other administrative functions for a fee. AID and Peace Corps together got a computer. It was the first computer that AID had. It was bought on the condition that Peace Corps would be able to use that computer, as well as AID. Peace Corps paid a third of the cost.

Q: This was the big main frame?

BROWN: This was a big main frame. Well, in those days, it was big, but it's pocket stuff now. In 1961 it was a very good computer. When John Strand left they asked me to be the representative to the Peace Corps. I was a GS-7. I said, “I don't have any experience,

I don't know anything about computers. I can write something if somebody tells me what it is they want to have written, but I don't have that experience." Nobody else did either, so I left for the Peace Corps and I worked both places for a couple of years. I wrote the program that selected the Peace Corps volunteers, because there was no Peace Corps yet in 1961. They thought they were going to have 60,000 applicants in the Peace Corps. They didn't have that many, but they needed a computer to know how to judge these applicants. So, I wrote the program and it worked and that program ran for 20 or 30 years. They were still using the logic of the program, which basically scored people that have certain characteristics which met the Peace Corps requirements for an assignment. The score was sent to a selection committee in the Peace Corps to weed out those they didn't want and the ones they did want would be brought in and interviewed. I didn't ever say I selected anybody, but I weeded out. So, that was a lot of fun. I was going to meetings with Sargeant Shriver and Bill Moyers and I was sitting in there as a GS-7. Everyone thought I knew what I was talking about, and it was the most exciting time that I've had in the government. I worked, probably 80 hours a week, including weekends.

Q: You were in on the creation of the Peace Corps?

BROWN: Absolutely. It was an exciting group of people. The people are all totally committed. Moyers and Sargeant Shriver were two of the most interesting people.

Q: How would you describe Sargeant Shriver as a person, his personality, as a person to work for?

BROWN: He was very aggressive. He was extremely friendly and easy to work with. He kind of relied on his people. He had some very good people. There were lots of meetings, evening meetings when we would talk about strategies and Sargeant Shriver would be pretty much listening to almost everything.

Q: Who else was working there then besides Shriver?

BROWN: There was a man named Dr. Kelly who came from the University of Michigan, a psychologist. He was head of the selection division and he's the guy that I worked with most of the time. The one who figured out what kind of skills that have to go into the computer and how to select them. He was very interesting. Most of my time was spent with the selection people, sometime with the volunteer people. Once the volunteers were selected then they started a whole new division about the care and feeding of the volunteers and the training program that they set up. I think it was in Puerto Rico they were doing training. But, it was just lots of New Deal kind of people who were just extremely in to the Kennedy Administration and in to the concept of the Peace Corps. It was fun, I never thought of it as work. And, here I was 25 years old with no experience whatsoever, telling them that no, you can't do this or you can do that, and I didn't know if you couldn't do it or you could do it.

Q: You are refering to computer programing?

BROWN: Well, yes the system side of it. I had no guidance, because nobody in AID knew it either. There was one man named Al Jackson who was my mentor who worked at AID and he later left to work for IBM. When Al left, I decided I can't stay at AID anymore. This was at the end of '63. So, I decided I would go to the private sector, because Management Planning never gave me what I wanted, which was to work as a management analyst. I ended up in a whole new field that I was totally unprepared for, but I was skilled at it and got to like it. I thought , why should I stay here, because there's nobody that's going to teach me more than I already know. So, I applied for the private sector. I was accepted at a company called PRThey hired me despite my qualifications, they told me. Not because of them. My last day at AID was the day Kennedy was assassinated. My last morning I came in and heard the news on the radio while we were there. So, my going away party was cancelled and I left and went the following Monday to my new job. I worked there for four years.

Four years in the private sector - 1963

Q: What was this company doing?

BROWN: PRC was basically a computer contracting company with almost all of their contracts with the Navy here in Washington. They were a very small company out of California founded by people from the RAND Corporation. I thought I would grow with the company. There were 30 people, but by the time I left there were several thousand people there. They had made acquisitions like crazy. They were spread all over the world and they grew a lot faster than I did. Because I had some experience in financial work from AID and not just the military aspect, they gave me work to do with mortgage loan company, as my first assignment.

Q: With whom?

BROWN: Frederick Berens Mortgage Loan Company. Then, they sent me to the Navy where I worked on a project in Hawaii and then was assigned as a sub-contractor.

Q: Doing what?

BROWN: Computer programming and systems work. I was a sub-contractor to work with G.E. They had a group called G.E. Tempo which was kind of like the technical side of G.E. on computers. I went to work for G.E. Tempo and they made me the technical director of the project, even though I was just a sub contractor and G.E. really should have managed it. Then they brought in a person from G.E. PRC offered me a job with NATO in Paris where I would design a personnel system for all of the U.S. bases in Europe. I would live in Paris and I would be able to go to all the bases and work out a system over two years. I accepted that job. I thought it would be a very good job to have. G.E., in the meantime, was told by the Navy that if I don't stay on the project they would drop PRC as a sub-contractor. So, they called PRC and said, “We'd like to have Maury stay on it.” So, PSRC called me in and said, “We know we made a promise to you to take this job, but you have

to understand our relations with G.E. will be hurt by this and we lose a lot of money on this contract if the Navy pulls out, but it's up to you, you make the decision." It was kind of like my mother talking to me making me feel guilty. So, I said, "Okay I'll stay on the contract up in Washington." I got very discouraged about it.

Q: You didn't go to Paris?

BROWN: I didn't go to Paris, I stayed on this project because I was a company guy. I mean I was still in my 20's. There was a guy in AID named Vic Porlier who worked with me back in early '60s who had taken over and he was doing some kind of MIS project management job in Management Planning. Vic was going to go to Korea with AID. He called me one day and said, "Would you like to come back to AID and take my job?" It was a GS-14 and it was more money than I was making at that time. I was really upset, because I had lost that chance to go to Paris and I just saw myself sticking there with the Navy for a long time. So, I came back and said I would take the position. In the meantime, Vic failed his physical and couldn't go to Korea, after they told me they wanted me to take his job. So, what do I do now. But, they came back and offered me the Chief of Programming at AID in the data processing shop.

Returned to AID to head computer programming - 1967

Q: Programming and data assistant?

BROWN: Computer programming, yes. I still thought that was okay and I came back. Shortly after I came back they got rid of the head of data processing and brought in another person from the outside, a person named David Dale and they named me the Deputy to him. I was already a GS-15. It was a pretty quick jump, but I think because of my PRC background they thought I knew more than I probably did. But, I got into management at that point and shortly after that David left. At that time, data processing was just a branch within Management Planning. It was very, very small. Even though there were a lot of people there, it was looked at by the agency as a very minor function.

Almost a blue collar function. The Head of Management Planning was a man named Manny Deangelis and we reported directly to Manny. Manny then suffered a heart attack. This was in 1970, '69-'70. He was going to recover, but AID management felt that there was too much stress on him to have both the Management Planning side and a data processing side. There's a man named Jim Kerns who was the Deputy AA for management. Governor Lane Dwinell was the head of management of AID and former Governor of New Hampshire. They said we're going to split it off and we're going to make the data processing branch a whole office, just like Management Planning is. They asked me to apply. I applied. I think they had somebody else they wanted to bring in to do the job. But at that time, there was the Peterson Commission which recommended that AID be abolished in 1970. This man came in and-

Q: Where from?

BROWN: He was from an aircraft company in California. He came out and talked to me and he said, “I know you're looking for this job, but I think they want me to have it. What do you think about the job?” I talked to him. He said, “I'm very nervous about coming here and taking your job when the Agency is about to be abolished.” I said, “Well, I'm sure I wouldn't do it either coming from California.” So, he turned the job down and they selected me to be the Director. So, then I got a GS-16, and I took over the data processing office and I stayed in that position for six years.

Q: What was the function? What was the job on the data processing?

BROWN: Well, it was the same as what it is now. We still have our old computer systems. They're 30-35 computer systems and mainly financial systems, personnel systems. They have programming assistants, people under that. There was also the records management program which is new in Administrative Services. To my dismay the focus was always on financial management. It's been that way since the day they brought the computer in 1961 and it's still that way today. AID considered itself a bank and the money aspects were the

most important. Probably 90, 95 percent of the effort for the computer office was to support the controller's work. That's all we did. I guess it was in '70, Administrator Dan Parker came to me when I was first started. Parker had a different view. Parker was a techy. He came from Parker Penz and he was a good friend of David Packard. He was a roommate of Packard so the HP stuff was dear to him and he and I talked a lot. Probably if there's one man that influenced me more than anybody it was Dan Parker. I liked him personally. He was an extremely interesting man, down to earth, easy to talk to. We talked about everything from technology to cancer. I remember the first time I had to give him a briefing. I went in with the Head of the Administration at that time. I had a beard and they got really upset that I was going to brief the Administrator with a beard. Very upset about it. But, it didn't bother Parker any. What Parker had me do was to set up a series of seminars for the AA's. We did it over a weekend. I brought in speakers from Anheuser Busch from IBM headquarters in Armonk, New York. I brought in some professors, we did modeling, we talked about how computers can be used in business applications. Some of the AA's, like Curt Farrar and Alex Shakow took to it right away. They loved it. Others, I can't remember the man's name who was head of the African Bureau, was not particularly pleased with that. He felt he was being put in a box.

Q: Sam Adams?

BROWN: Right. Sam said, “Don't put me in a box.” Systems put me in a box. I don't have any flexibility. We had all kinds. There was Herman Klein from LAC who I respect probably most of all of the AA's that I have dealt with in those days. Herman Klein gave his people lots of leeway to experiment, to work on things. They developed systems, they brought in very bright people. LAC was like it's own agency. Of course, all of the Bureaus were like their own agencies, but this one stood out. I always felt that management wise and inventive wise they really were far ahead of the other Bureaus. The African Bureau kind of dragged behind. As a homework assignment from that, Parker told each AA to come up with some ideas on how they could use computers, because all they were doing with computers was the financial part. He wanted me to then go to see them the following week

and get a list from them of applications for their bureaus. Some people, like Curt Farrar had a 10 page list on how things could help him. Others needed more help. We went further and did the same kind of seminars with the DAA's which was also interesting. But, at that point we started getting into negative thinking. That's when the frustration began. Johnny Murphy was the Deputy Administrator. Johnny Murphy was a former controller of AID and his close associates were people from the controller side. Ed Kosters was another former controller and a very big ally of Johnny. They didn't like all of this stuff. They thought this was Buck Rogers and they felt it wouldn't work. What Parker wanted to do at one time was to get little HP hand-held calculators, which did more than calculating. He wanted me to give these out to all the projects overseas so a paramedic could go out in to the field and do their work with these hand-held computers. Through interviews, they could try to look up diseases and do other kinds of things with it if they could tie it in. He was really ahead of where we were in the world at that time. Well, Murphy, he just couldn't stand that, and he asked, “Where are you going to get the money for this? This is crazy. Where are they going to get trained? How are they going to learn how to do this?” It ended up in a very, very bad situation. So bad that eventually they told me that I was going to be relieved. They felt that I was too much involved in pushing the program side of the agency and I was taking resources that they thought were good resources away from the controller and putting them on others' administrative tasks that we were trying to build up. One of the systems was to work with disaster relief staff and start building profiles of countries before the disasters occurred.

Q: Early warning system?

BROWN: An early warning system, right. The Controller said they weren't getting good enough support. I was warned and one day, Christmas Eve, I was called in to Charles Mann who was the head of the Management Bureau at that time and told that I was going to be relieved of my position. I was called down there and I thought they were going to have a party. There and there was nobody in the room. I said to the secretary, “Are we

having a party?" She said, "No, no, he just wants to see you." I said, "Oh, okay" At that time I was told that I would be reassigned to a system called PBAR.

Q: What's that?

BROWN: Program, Budget, Accounting and Reporting System. One of those sub parts of PBAR was an institutional memory part. Carter Ide, who was former Mission Director in Nepal complained once to the Administrator that projects were being repeated. Isn't there some way that we can discover what happened in these projects before, and, of course, at that time there wasn't any way. Carter had come back from Nepal and was working the Office of Public Affairs. When they did the PBAR exercise, Carter was put in charge of a little task force to look at creating an institutional memory and that was one of the sub units of PBAR. When I was told that I'm going to be leaving the computer office, they told me that I would go with Carter to start up an office to maintain an institutional memory. I could care less about the institutional memory. I didn't want it. I felt that I was a computer professional all this time and they're taking me out of my profession. I told that to the Agency and I started out interviewing other agencies, but to go to work for the Interior Department just never seemed right to me. I felt I had to work in an international arena somehow. I felt I had to work Washington, even though I was working in an administrative capacity in Washington as a Civil Servant, the work I did overseas in helping people, the travel that I did have, because I did a lot of travel when I was even with the computer group, I couldn't see leaving anything like that.

Helped AID establish its institutional memory program - 1976

So, I decided with Carter, that we'd make the best of what we got. Well, the two of us sat in Rosslyn - no secretary, no staff, no budget, nothing. I left the data processing office at the end of January, 1976. For two or three months Carter took sick leave and I sat around trying to figure out what I should be doing with my life. I was very discouraged, probably the lowest part of my life. Then one day, we were still in the Administrative Bureau, they

gave us some money, 15,000 dollars and said, “If you want, you can get a contract for somebody to help put together your concept of what this is all about. We gave the contract to Practical Concepts, Inc., the inventor of the log frame. We had Leon Rosenberg, Molly Hageboeck came over with a couple of others and develop a kind of framework for the office which I understood. Carter had trouble with it, because Molly did a lot of charts and graphs and turned Carter off. But, we understood what had to be done and we began to do abstracting as a first step. We got some money for that. We gave a contract to a company, who is still here now, LTs Corporation to do abstracts of the projects.

Q: What was the concept to it at that time?

BROWN: The concept at that time was that we needed to be able to tell a project designer what happened in the past about projects that were similar to the one they were designing. The idea was at that time, it would be an automated system. So, the project designer produced what we called a PID, a Project Identification Document, saying this is the basic idea of what my project is all about. That was submitted, because projects were only approved in Washington at that time, I think. So, it would come to Washington for approval. The PID would automatically be sent to the computer, and it would go into our system and match the project to other similar projects. It would print out an abstract of what the project was, including log frame information and would be sent automatically to the designers, saying, you didn't ask for this, but here is something that you might want.

The problem was that it was too difficult in an automated way to identify the sectors because the codes that were used to categorize the projects could not fully describe the nature of these projects. So, it didn't work that way. What we did the first year or two was just write abstracts to create the data base. We would write descriptions of the projects, abstract other documents in addition to the designed document, abstract the evaluation documents, and feasibility studies.

We then added a research staff, but it did not have an immediate impact. For one thing, all of the correspondence with the field was done through the pouch. So, if we would get something in a cable, coming in, but we had to send documents out, we'd put them in the pouch and it would take six weeks for somebody to get it. Well, by that time, they forgot what they asked. And, there was no dialogue, there was little interaction with the requester. It was very, very slow.

Q: All these documents were not on a computer, they were on?

BROWN: There were on Microfiche. They'd be printed out on hard copy to be mailed out there. We wanted the field to have Microfiche and although some missions had the equipment, nobody wanted to read Microfiche. I remember talking once to Fred Schieck who was Deputy AA for Latin America at that time. Fred said to me, “I want a document. I don't want even to get into Microfiche. I don't want to go looking through this Buck Rogers stuff, I want the book in front of me. I'm going to keep one finger on this page and one finger on this page and be able to look at things. If you can't do that, it's not worth it.” The agency, up until this time was still anti-automation. I mean, the whole time I was in charge of the data management program, I was fighting to try to get people to accept automation as a tool that can be used in development. But, nobody wanted to do that. There were a few enlightened people who could see the benefits of it, but most people said, we're too busy for all of that. The Agency just bucked it the whole time.

Q: Was this true of the Controller?

BROWN: Even the Controller was, yes. They preferred the old accounting machines and calculators if they could. They never developed systems people who could think beyond the way we were doing things back in 1961. They just carried the same concept through systems, such as loan accounting, instead of trying to buy off-the-shelf packages that could be adapted. They insisted that their way was the right way and it's still the old accounting system methods. And, G.A.O., I remember a man named Frank Zappacoasta

who was head of the team that came in from G.A.O. to look at our accounting system and he would say to me, “This is so antiquated and this is back in the late 60's. It's so antiquated and nobody here has any desire to try and change it. They may try to make it go faster, but they don't make it better, they make it faster.” So no, I don't think that even the Controller understood how information could be modernized and they preferred doing it the old way. You look at the new management system and it's not much better today. I don't know if we've ever learned a lesson from that.

Q: We will come back to that. So, you got this little unit going and obviously it was growing a bit.

BROWN: It was growing a bit.

Q: Where were you located organizationally?

BROWN: Organizationally we had been moved in to PPC and been combined with the library. There was a small little library down in the State Department on the first floor. That library was transferred to us. There was another organization in PPC called the Statistics and Reports Division. There use to be a man named Al Huntington who ran that division. Very large division.

Q: Economic statistics?

BROWN: Right. Economic statistics and they kept what was known as the green book. All the official statistics of the agency. Well, they were doing all of that manually. So, a decision was made to move that Statistics and Reports Division into the Development Information (DI) function in PPC as well.

Q: Was it called DI then?

BROWN: It was called DI, yes. PPC/DIt might have been DIS, I'm not sure. Then in '78, there was another re-organization of the agency. That re-organization, led by a person

named Tony Babb, didn't go over real well with a lot of people. They put our office and a small little office in the old Technical Assistance Bureau together and formed something called DIU which stood for Development Information and Utilization. The Utilization function, which was under a guy named Del Myron, worked on how you can take the results of a project and transfer it so that people can use it properly. They didn't do that. They didn't know how to do that. There was one project which they called Knowledge Synthesis. They spent about a million dollars on this project, which was to take, I don't remember if it was in water or what the sector was, and try to create handbooks and textbooks which would become the Bible on that particular sector. It never worked, they couldn't do it and eventually —

Q: Do you know why?

BROWN: It was too big. They tried to do too much. Too big a subject and also getting concurrence from all of the other Bureaus makes was too difficult. One thing this Agency always has is lots of experts in particular areas who don't believe that anybody else in that area is an expert. So, there's all this controlling of the turf because you feel that your way is the only way. If you ever try to get concurrence across the board, you're never going to get anything done. That fell apart. DI existed because the information part was still useful, but when we got merged in to what was called, I guess at that time, the Development Support Bureau, things began to change. The Deputy there was Curt Farrar who was an old friend from my computer days. But, Curt didn't share our philosophy of what DI should be. Curt felt that we should not be providing analytical services, we should not be doing work supporting the field, and we should not be abstracting evaluations. What we should be doing is collecting technical state of the art articles, research findings, being basically a library and don't do anything if you're not asked to do it. No proactive work. If you're asked for something, get them a book, get them an article, get them what they want. They brought in a woman named Leda Allen who came out of the Library of Congress and the Agricultural Library who was a cataloger and put her in charge of this group, and of me.

Library of Congress

Leda was a librarian and that's all she wanted to do. Well, it was very frustrating to work in this environment.

There were studies done of our office. The studies were always concluding that we're not making any impact, that we have too many people and there was a decision to cut back on the people. One of the first decisions was to get rid of Deputies and that was me. So, my job was abolished, but they didn't have a place for me to go. I was interviewed by Rocky Staples in the Far East Bureau or whatever it was called at that time, to be the Head of Management, because there was a woman named Kay Harley who was leaving and Kay suggested me. I thought I was going to get that job, it sounded interesting. But, Rocky said, “No, you don't have enough personnel experience to have this job. The job is a personnel job.” I said, “No, it's not a personnel job.” A good management guy can start bringing your communications together better in the Bureau and create a lot better infrastructure for communications. You can't do personnel only. That agreement went nowhere.

So, they kept me in DIU, and shortly after that the GAO came in, that was in '82. The GAO came in and did the same kind of study that all of these other guys were doing, but their conclusion went to the Administrator, not to the Head of the Development Support Bureau. Their conclusion was that we have a lot of resources that were not being used properly in the Agency, the field is not benefitting from any of it, there is no analytical capability, it needs to have analysts who can interpret results of projects, who can interpret design, who can then feed that interpretation to a designer instead of just being a laid-back library. The Administrator created a task force under Kelly Kammerer and the task force started looking at some of the possibilities to answer the GAO criticism. The head of Evaluation in the PPC Bureau at that time was Dick Blue and I think John Bolton was the head of PPC at that time. Dick Blue had as one of his division chiefs, Molly Hageboeck, who was of course one of the people instrumental in putting our concept together in the first place. They went to the Deputy Administrator and suggested that DIU be taken out of the Development Support Bureau, or it might have been the S and T Bureau by that time, and

be put in to PPC, combined with the Office of Evaluation and to create a new office called CDIE, the Center for Development Information and Evaluation. The Deputy Administrator called Nyle Brady in who was head of the S and T Bureau, called John Bolton in, or maybe Dick Blue too, and asked for their opinions. Brady just answered that it should be in the S and T Bureau, because it's always been in the S and T Bureau and that if it's not in the S and T Bureau, all of his research contractors won't have access to the library. Well, that made no sense to anybody and the decision was made rather quickly to create CDIand move us out or back to PPC and to create an analytical unit as well. A man named Haven North was brought in to head it up. When Haven came in, it was difficult, because we really didn't know what all this analytical stuff meant. Marion Warren at this time, I think, was head of evaluation and Annette Binnendijk who was running the economic and social data work that we had taken over from Bureau of Statistics and Reports Division. We put her in charge of the analytical function, but Annette really couldn't figure out what that meant and neither could we. So, at the beginning it was kind of difficult, because we weren't really sure what our roles were supposed to be. But, the best part about it was that the DI part was given the authority to get contractors in to do the analytical work.

Q: At that time you had a RSSA group?

BROWN: Nothing. We just had a library. We got a RSSA with the Department of Agriculture Graduate School. That's what was good, because I was given the authority to go out and get people, who would provide “value added services.”

Q: How large was the staff before that?

BROWN: At one time we had a staff of over 30 direct hires.

Q: In DIU?

BROWN: Yes. Counting the utilization people and counting the economic and social data people, we had a staff of over 30 people, direct hires. We had contractors doing

abstracting and we had contractors doing the warehousing, but the rest were direct-hires. We hired a librarian from Notre Dame, a man named David Donovan who was in charge of the library function. It was a very large bureaucracy, actually. Then, as these cuts came in, including mine, it just kept getting smaller and smaller. In 1978 or '80, there was a decision under an OMB circular called A-76, which was to contract out more functions that could be done by contractors. They used as an example, librarians as one of the functions that could be done. Well, that's all that AID needed. Get rid of all the librarians and they were forced-placed in to other parts of the agency and contractors were then brought in. We interviewed and hired through the USDA Graduate School. The nice thing about the RSSA was these were not employees of the Graduate School, they were people that I found and said they hired them. So, it was just like a body shop to bring people in to our office. That was for only one year. And, one year later the Agency was criticized, because we weren't the only people in the Agency doing that. Lots of people were doing it. So, we had to drop the RSSA and had to write an RFP and go out on the street to get a contract to do the same thing with the private sector.

Q: It was also the time when there was a big push for private sector.

BROWN: There was a very big push for private sector, right. When we sent out the RFP we had several companies that proposed. Several companies submitted the names of the same people that we had working under the RSSA. There were about 12 people at that time. The Academy for Educational Development won that contract and they've been there ever since. This was about 1984. They've won several bids after that and that's been built up considerably, of course, over the years. Once AED came in and I could turn it over to a contractor, things were a lot easier for me, as well, because they really took care of carving out a way of handling questions and working with the field better. I think the relationships with the field just started to improve.

Q: What was your concept of the development information function at that time?

BROWN: My concept then was to do more outreach to the missions. I felt strongly that the missions were not being taken care of. They needed to have more interaction with our office. I took a lot of trips to missions. We did a lot of P.R. work with the missions.

Q: Did you find them receptive?

BROWN: They were receptive to the idea, but they weren't receptive to the methodology. We still had the pouch and it was still difficult to interact easily with the mission. We used phone calls more so that we could at least find out what the person wanted instead of just guessing from a cable. But, the dialogue still wasn't there and it was not easy. It wasn't until a few years later, I don't know which year it was any more, when Alan Woods came as the Administrator. He brought in Mike Doyle as head of management and he brought Molly Hageboeckback as a special assistant. Molly said, “In the agency that we were working at before, we all had pc's on our desk, why can't we all have pc's now?” And, although IRM didn't feel that that was a good thing to do, they were forced in to doing it.

Q: Why were they opposed to it?

BROWN: IRM has always had a mainframe mentality that they felt everything should be controlled by IRM. Part of it was due to me, because when I took over my job back in 1970, the Bureaus that had their own computer expertise were creating systems that were fighting the central systems. They weren't compatible, they were often being misused, they were hiring contractors at prices that were ridiculous and they were doing things that we already had. We especially had trouble with the Latin American Bureau, because they had some very good computer people. They had a RSSA with the Census Bureau and the Census Bureau provided a lot of data processing expertise in the agency, especially overseas. It broadened my staff. My staff felt that they wanted to control more and we worked very hard at trying to centralize the control of all systems and data processing people to a point where personnel would not allow a system analyst to be placed in any other Bureau. They all have to be centralized. Well, I have to live with that nightmare

that I invented the rest of my life and it has bothered me ever since. But, IRM has always felt that they wanted to control all of the systems and it would have to be as central as possible and they used the mainframe mentality to do it. PC's give you too much freedom. You can design your own programs, you can do things yourself. It's the kind of problem that they always had with the desk records. People would keep records in their desk and there would be conflicts with Congressional testimony because they had different numbers than the controllers. Well, PCs just magnified that. If you have a computer you can do modeling, you can do all kinds of stuff and that would just add to the multi-headed monster that the Congress saw all the time. So, IRM all along still felt that this was not a good idea.

I think ever since the PCs came in you can say a lot of good things have happened. Communications have happened, e-mail has happened, but you can also look at it from IRM's point of view that it's harder than ever to try to develop any kind of central management information system because of that. What happened in DI was that we began to have the ability to communicate with the field and dialogue then begin with the missions. We were able to send responses through e-mail to the field. That's when the field actually accepted what we did.

I remember one time there was a request from the Philippines that was going out. I went down to the library to see what we were going to send them and there were 20 boxes of reports. I said, “What is this?” They said, “Well, that's what they wanted.” I said, “They didn't ask for 20 boxes. They wanted to know something about a particular project and you're sending them everything you have. They're all big reports and they're not going to read this.” But, that was the way we did it. By the time the 20 boxes even got there who was going to care about it? So, the automation and the ability to use new technology really was the answer to creating a good working relationship with the field. The other thing that happened was that we dramatically improved our research capabilities. However, even though the field and the field liked us and gave us good reviews, if you said CDIE in Washington they would think of evaluation. Haven was the head of it and the Washington staff had more exposure to that part of CDIE. If you said CDIE in the field it was more likely

that they would think of DI because that was their communication. So, you had two views of what CDIE was. I think it stayed that way for a long, long time. It was good with the field, but we were very frustrated that we never —

Q: Wasn't there some attempt to integrate it in to the Bureaus or provide a service in the headquarters?

BROWN: Not until late 80's. We may have paid lip service, but we really didn't push it. We put a couple of people in and they couldn't do it on their own. They sat in the Bureau. They thought people should come to them. They didn't know how to go out and try to attract business. We had the wrong staff for it. Then, when we were still in PPC, Reggie Brown came in as the head of PPC and one day I gave him a tour of our facility in Rosslyn. Reggie said, “How much does this cost? This is very impressive seeing this factory-like condition, all these books coming in and being abstracted and catalogued and micro-filmed.” So, I told him how much it cost. At that time the whole office was running at three million dollars a year.

He said, “How much do you charge for your service?” I said, “We don't charge for our service.” He said, “Well, how do you know your service is any good?” I said, “Well, we had X thousand requests and everybody is asking.” He said that everyone was asking because it's free. If it were good they would be willing to pay for it. I'm not going to give you three million dollars this year, I'm only going to give you two million dollars this year. You collect one million dollars some other way.” I said, “Well how am I going to do that?” He said, “I don't know.” I said, “Am I going to charge everybody that comes into the library a dollar and if I get a million visitors I'll have my million dollars? I mean, how do I do it?” He said, “That's for you to figure out, but you're going to have to get a million dollars somewhere.” So, we sat down and strategized for awhile and we came up with the idea that the Bureaus are going to have to pay for it. They were always worried, because in the past the concept was we were like frosting on a cake. When you can't get the ingredients for the cake, the frosting is the first thing that's going to go. The libraries will be the first thing cut in the

mission, the information function is not highly valued that it would hold up to budget cuts. We had no choice here. We had to do it. What I did was to go to each regional Bureau and I tell them, depending on the size of the Bureau and the number of requests that came in, that they're going to have to pay a prorated share of the million dollar deficit. Africa Bureau had to pay the most. I think they had to pay $225,000 or 230,000 or something. There was a man named John Westley, who I still think of as one of the guardian angels of our office. John was the one who said, “It's worth every penny. If you divide the number of projects into this amount of money and to pay a couple thousand dollars per projects for this research.” Made sense to me. John said, “Yes.” He broke the ice. Then, I was able to go to the other Bureaus. I went to the Latin American Bureau and they said, “No.” I said, “Well, Africa Bureau is doing it, but you don't have to, we just won't be able to support you. We'll support those Bureaus that pay a fee. So, they said, “Well, we'll do it for one year, but we think it should be all PPC money.” I said, “Well, let's see how it goes after one year.” So, they put their money in. Each of the others put their money in. Some questioned why they were paying more than another Bureau. They all wanted to know what all the Bureaus were paying. But, we collected the million dollars.

In order to make it easier for them to give us the million dollars, I offered them one person from the research staff per Bureau to live in the Bureau. We picked some good people this time to go over there. The first one was Ann Langhaug who went to the Latin America Bureau and Ann had experience in Ecuador and the library there. She was a very maternal person who knew how to take care of people. Did more than she was supposed to, but became invaluable to them. So, after the first year, I needed money again, because PPC and the budget office was still saying, “The only way you're going to prove your worth is by continuing to do this. And, until we tell you otherwise, you're going to have to keep doing it.” So, the next year, we raised a little bit more, but it was easier, because if they didn't pay it they weren't going to get their person that was working there. By this time they had become somewhat dependent on that person. They came back then and said, “Can we get more than one person? We like what Ann does, can we get a second person?” I said,

“Well, in addition to your fee, if you want to buy additional services, you can buy them. If you want analytical services on economics and social data you can buy a person to come in from that group. If you want to do something else let me know. If it fits our scope of work we can do that. So, the first thing that people wanted was economic and social data people, because the economists were being cut back in the agency and they didn't have economists in the Bureaus. Having these people living on site and doing a lot of their work for them was something that they really wanted. So, we had people in each Bureau from that group of economists from our staff, from our contractors. Then, we had a person come in named Ann Williams.

Q: She was a lawyer.

BROWN: She was a lawyer and she was a librarian also. This was before. We had somebody first come in from Guatemala. They wanted to know if we could provide an information center in Guatemala. We had it in our scope of work. It was going to cost a little more, because they had to pay for the facility to be created in Guatemala City, but we were able to go through the scope of work and pull out those things that we felt that we could do. They wrote a new contract with us.

Q: This was in the mission?

BROWN: It was in the mission. It was in ROCAP. It was to support the regional projects in Central America, doing newsletters, communications, but trying to coordinate what everybody was doing, what we knew about regional activities and then have that go out to all the various missions in Central America all in Spanish. Provide training in Spanish, training programs on computers, some Internet stuff. But, it was our first attempt of doing something in an overseas environment and it worked very well. It lasted for two or three years before the funding dried up and we couldn't keep it any more. We started doing other kinds of —

Q: You had a center in Egypt, didn't you?

BROWN: No, that was the mission. The mission had its own center. We supported it from Washington, but they didn't pay us for that. We just provided some technical assistance. We sent people out there. We did a lot of that. We sent people to various missions to help them with their work, maybe develop a scope of work for a new person that they wanted, to hire a person, or to work on their catalogs or try to unify things, but that was all done as part of our responsibilities. We never felt that that should be paid for. When we did that the mission only paid for our transportation and per diem, but they didn't pay for the contractors' salaries or any of that. We paid that ourselves. The only one in the field that we ran was in Guatemala. We had a lot of large efforts. We had one called the Center for Trade and Investment Services, where the Private Investment Bureau came to us and wanted to know if we could provide research services for their helping U.S. businesses find work on commodities they could ship to AID projects. That was very large. We had 10 or 12 people physically moved over to that Bureau to work over there. We got a large contract from the Africa Bureau on something called the Leland initiative, which was to hook up 20 Sub-Saharan African countries to the Internet. But, actually what we were asked to do was to go out and do studies of the various countries in Africa to see whether or not they're capable of handling an Internet.

Q: This is the country again, not the mission?

BROWN: This was the country. These are institutions within the country. The mission was the control office, but the work was with educational institutions, consulting firms, research institutions. The idea was to find organizations within each country that could be an Internet mode and the missions would be able to capitalize on that expertise. That's still going on. They've established Internet facilities in several sub-Saharan African countries.

Q: What does that mean specifically? To have Internet facility in a country?

BROWN: That you would be able to have country institutions have access to local Internet providers in the country.

Q: What they call a server?

BROWN: Well, it would be similar to AOL. We would look at questions such as: can these institutions afford to pay the monthly charges to use Internet; what kinds of applications will the institution use; will it be work that is development oriented; and can it relate to what the mission wants to have done. We are trying to find ways to use world wide communication data bases that would help in the development process. We want the missions to do that. We did training. Part of the work that we've done in the past was to go to Jamaica and to Indonesia to show them how Internet facilities, how the data bases on the Internet, can be useful in meeting their strategic objectives. So that you would sit down with the environment group in the Indonesia Mission and show them what environment data bases are available for them, how they can use them and how it can help them in doing their strategic plans. I don't know if that's still continuing now, but it was a big success in Jamaica and Indonesia and we were looking to do it again in West Africa and looking for other possibilities when I retired. I don't know what has happened since then, but I still believe that the niche for DI now is in that area, not in providing research services any more. I believe that there's enough out there that a lot of people can be self sufficient. You might need some help in looking at AID experience, but if you want to go beyond AID, which a lot of people need to do, the Internet can be useful for you. No one in AID understands the content of the Internet, except DI people and that's where DI really could make a mark.

Q: Let's go back a little bit. What was the kind of information that you were collecting? What scale are we talking about in the DI operation that related to AID?

BROWN: We collected all the documentation that had any substantive reflection of the AID projects. Feasibility studies, design documents, evaluative documents, and some

program documents. But, the idea was to try to present as much substantive information to a designer about how that project was designed and what happened to it as possible. I think what's happened since then, since the original concept of providing that kind of experiential information, was that the people in the field seemed to know more about it and also felt that a lot of the old projects were no longer relevant. They don't design the same projects any more. They don't even have projects any more. The activities are different. The subjects changed and the methodologies have changed a lot. Even on the medical side, the methodologies changed. So, they're more interested now in new approaches, what other people are doing, what other donors are doing and the technology itself. I think that, in the last year or two, there have been more questions that way than there are questions about what is AID's experience in a particular category.

Q: But does DI still keep AID documents?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: What kind of requirements?

BROWN: Because there's still a requirement to have an institutional memory for the agency. Scholars use it for other purposes. Sometimes its useful in testimony on the hill that you might want to be able to show them. But, I don't know how much relevance it still has in the way it does its business any more. What happened over the last year before I retired was a new management system was created and a whole new way of designing activities and working with your resources that are available. It wasn't possible any more to find documents that capture the information the way we did it in the past. So, now you're going to have to design a whole new system to try to capture activities as it reflects the agency's strategic planning process which we don't have. It's still not been done.

Q: That would get into the Requirements Results Report Systems?

BROWN: No. One of the frustrating parts of this job was ability to get into the new management system design at an early stage. We kept trying and we were never allowed to even sit in the meetings where we would have an impact that meant something. They gave lip service, yes we know, we know, we know, but it was never thought of until now when they're starting to see that they can't get it? How are you going to get it. So, the office is really struggling with that. Now I understand that there is a change occurring that the DI office is being merged with the operations unit of the re-engineering group. That's the group that will be looking at the documentation of how the agency captures this documentation. Perhaps, by combining those two units it will —

Q: That's separated out away from the evaluation function isn't it?

BROWN: No. Well, it's separating that part of it out of evaluation, but it's still part of CDIIt's still part of the overall. It's just bringing in a fourth function, just adding it to DI or adding DI to it, but putting that into CDIE.

Q: What is this function?

BROWN: It's the operations element of the new management system that deals with all the documentation and notes collected. Larry Tanner is the person in charge of it.

Q: Give us some sense of the scale of the development information function as it changed over time. What are we talking about?

BROWN: We are talking about at the time we went in to the cost recovery program, 1990. We had maybe 20 research analysts working on the AED contract. It had gone up from 12 to 20 by that time. Our budget had gone from three million dollars, well it was three million dollars a year in 1990. Once the fees began and the buy-ins began, the number of research of staff and librarian staff went up to between 50 and 60. The economic and social data staff went from three to 14. The clearing house pretty much stayed the same level. Total budget went from three million dollars to almost nine million dollars. It almost

tripled. The ratio of the buy-ins and the fees that the Bureau pay are still pretty much the same, except what happened is that now it is reversed. At the beginning, the Agency, through PPC, was paying two-thirds of the operation. The rest of the Bureaus were paying one-third. Now through the buy-ins and fees, the Bureaus are paying two-thirds of the operation and PPC is paying one-third of the operation. So, if you look at it as I do, as a company, then the stockholders, the stockholders are now the Bureaus. DI works for the Bureaus, not for PPSo, PPC's interest, even though it's still there because they are paying a third, doesn't have the same weight as the rest of the Bureaus. The Bureaus now own it.

Q: Technically it's management is structurally under the PPC.

BROWN: Yes, still structurally under PPC, but the money that goes into it now really represents the entire agency and they owe it to the agency to serve them, because that's where two-thirds of the budget is coming from. What's missing is to have some kind of advisory group within the agency who could get their wishes and their priorities known to DThey are paying for it. We tried it a couple of times. We didn't get anybody coming to the meetings, but now, the Bureaus are questioning, why is it I'm spending this much money? What did you do for us? What did you do last year? The accounting has become very, very difficult. The guy who was my Deputy, Lee White spent hours and hours, months, trying to pull together all of the work we did for the Latin American Bureau or the Near East Bureau to show them what their money went for. Well, if we had an advisory group, we would be meeting periodically and they could see what was happening. It would be so much easier to run this operation. But, that hasn't happened yet. I think it's being considered again now. I've been asked to come back next Monday to talk about a new functional statement and hopefully, something like this might be created. I think that's really possible.

Q: Talk a little bit about the role of the research analysts.

BROWN: We went from generalists to specialists over the years. What we had when I left was several people who were environment specialists, several people who were health

and population specialists; a couple of people who specialized in democracy issues. Oh, that's what Ann Williams — forgive me for a minute to go back. Ann Williams wanted to set up an Africa Bureau Information Center. What she wanted was to set up an Information Center on democratization in Africa, only Africa. She had a scope of work and she came to me and said, “Here's the scope, do you have people that can do this?” So, we split it to show what we could do and what other contractors should do. We established that Information Center for people in the African Bureau on Democracy and Governance. It's probably expanded a bit now into wider use than democracy.

Q: Is it still under the DI?

BROWN: It's still under DI and it still works, fully funded by the Africa Bureau. That was really one of our most successful things. In addition, when the Democracy Center was established in the Global Bureau, they also came to us and wanted people. So, we also have three or four people in the Democracy Center, another three or four people in the Africa Bureau. So there's eight people working just in the democracy area.

Q: What do these people actually do?

BROWN: In the Africa Bureau, one of them is an editor and they write newsletters for the Bureau. Another collects documentation to send out to the various missions about democracy activities, conferences, events that are going on. Another one is a research analyst who will answer questions in the democracy sector from Africa Bureau Missions who want to know anything from AID experience to where we're going or what other groups are doing, some world wide stuff. The Democracy Center side focuses pretty much in the same area as the Africa Bureau, focusing on writing newsletters and trying to reach as many people throughout the agency, throughout the world actually, on what AID is doing in the democracy side. They don't have research analysts there as much as they have people who are writing. Democracy officers will send people out to conferences. They will send them into the field itself and work with people. One of the people that we

had working on the democracy center was selected as an IDI. Her name was Michelle Schimpp and she ended up going to Haiti as a democracy officer. Another person we had working in the private sector was a guy named Scott KleinberHe was also selected as an IDI and he also was sent to Haiti. Some of the research analysts got selected as personal service contractors. The education officer in South Africa is one of our former research analysts. An officer in Armenia is a PSC that came out of the economic and social data service group. So, these people are finding as they get known, they are being hired as personal service contractors or as IDI's or as contractors in the field. One person helped prepare a project design on a TDY in Egypt and then the company who won it ended up giving her a job in Egypt, so she left our office and went to work in Egypt. A research analyst's main job is to interpret, analyze and synthesize experience in a given project that they could give to somebody else or try to find out information in new technologies or in what other people are doing as a kind of information broker as a referral to other people who can be helpful. These are people who know the contractors, know who is doing what in the environment sector so that they can tell the AID missions about it. Research analysts also do a lot of traveling now, where they do things like I talked about before. How can we tell you about all of the data that is available to you in your sector so that we could work with you on developing your strategic plan. So, the research analysts are becoming more like consultants than the type who just sit back, get a request, answer the request and send it out.

Q: How would you characterize the change? How would you characterize the volume of requests?

BROWN: The volume of requests is cut back. We've gone from maybe 12,000 requests when CDIE originally was started.

Q: 12,000 a year?

BROWN: 12,000 individual requests a year to about 50,000 requests a year.

Q: 50,000 a year? I thought you said cut back?

BROWN: No. We went up to 50 maybe two or three years ago and in the last two or three years it's been cut back. We don't keep our records the same way, but my guess is we're probably between 30 and 40 now.

Q: Thousand requests?

BROWN: Yes. The differences are, however, the requests now are much more complicated and take a lot longer to do than they were before. The number of new projects have been cut back significantly. Activities are kind of one big activity covering many things and there may be one or two requests that come in over that.

Q: But, they cover more a sector rather than a project?

BROWN: They cover more sectors and they're harder to work on, because it's going to be a group of people having to do it. The number of missions have cut back considerably. It's hard to know. The new management system created lots of morale problems and people are not doing the same kinds of things they use to do. There's a lot of factors that go in to that. I would like to see an evaluation done this year, it's supposed to be done this year before the next RFP goes out on replacing the AED contract. Somebody has to sit down and figure out why this has happened. I don't really know. I have a lot of guesses, which I said, but I don't know why. Is it because the Internet is used more and the people out in the field have access to that information where they didn't have it before? Is it that through the Internet and e-mail they're able to ask other people to help them get information that they may know? I remember once going to Indonesia and I talked to the Irrigation Officer and I asked him, “Where do you get your information?” He said, “From my mom.” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “She sends me articles about irrigation in Israel and she sends me newspaper articles all the time.”

Q: She's on the Web?

BROWN: No. This was before the Web. She just mailed it to him. She mailed him articles. So, people have their own way of getting information. They have contractors who also have ways of getting information. It could be that people now understand how to get information more readily than they were able to in the past. Then maybe what they look for is interpreting AID experience, rather than this other information that's available for them on the Internet. Again, I can only guess what it is.

Q: What data bases do you connect with? Do you have more than just the AID information?

BROWN: Our staff has the developmental information system, which is basically the AID projects. All the AID projects and evaluations and attending reports with the projects. We also have the economic and social data system, which is a collection of data bases from the IMF World Bank, UNDP, UN Statistical Office, FAO of Statistical Information that relate to developmental, not necessarily AID. This is all economic and social data that our offices pulls in from all of these various resources and combines it in to a central data base that can be used by the agency. That's the data base that we used. All the other data is through the Internet. I don't know which ones they use any more, but the data that they have to get information on a particular topic on —

Q: The USDA for example, did they use their information?

BROWN: I don't know. We used to have a RSSA with the USDA to provide technical information on agriculture. That RSSA was dropped many years ago. I don't know what they do. We have exchange agreements with the World Bank so that the World Bank was able to give us information one on one that was not available to the rest of the users, but that had limited use for us, as well. It wasn't good enough for us to be able to send out.

Basically, the information that they use is information that you can get, along as you know what it is that you want and how to find it and how to interpret it when you get it.

Q: So, the research analyst is the key in the link of the process?

BROWN: Right. The research analyst now is really more again like a good reference librarian would be in the Arlington County Library. A good reference librarian and a subject matter expert person who understands the subjects well. Not so much an international relations person, but they have to know the AID program, because they have to know how this information relates to the AID program.

Working with other donors - 1989

Q: What about linking to the other donors?

BROWN: Probably outside the work I did at the Peace Corps when I first started in the government, the work I did at the end of my government time was probably the most satisfying. In 1989 I met with a group of donors in Paris to talk about sharing information. How can we get World Bank, UNDP, and IDRC data easily in a format that we can provide one another without a chore? What was happening, is we would get requests. A guy came from WHO and would ask us for all of the projects we had on water and sanitation. We gave it to him. He went to another agency, and they gave it to him, but it was totally different formats. He couldn't do anything with it. He wasn't able to handle it. He needed to get it in a more compatible way. So, we met in Paris to talk about how could we exchange information with each other in a way that would work. We talked about all the possibilities of failure and there were a lot of them. From confidentiality of documents, to different technologies, to language problems, to many, many, 30 some constraints. Not even knowing who to go to in an agency, that was constraint number one. Who do you go to? I was elected as Chairman from this little group, which was called the Study Group on Donor Coordination information. There were 10 or 12 organizations that were represented in Paris. Each of us was given a different task. One was given a task

on looking at technology; another one on common format; another one was on funding questions. We were given the task of identifying people in agencies. We wrote to 110 organizations and I got 90 positive replies from these donors and from institutions that implement projects with AID, all giving us the name of a person that would serve as the focal point in the organization that wrote to us. Some said that they'd be interested in doing work with us, but they didn't know who the focal point would be. It was too difficult, the European group in Brussels was one of them.

Q: The European Union.

BROWN: Yes. That was not easy. FAO had a terrible time. So, some could do it and some couldn't. We began to work on putting together a format that would be compatible with all the language problems and technical problems. We had several meetings, the initial group was basically UNDP, WHO, World Bank, USAID, CIDA, the OECD Development Center, the DAC Secretariat, and JICA. Japan was very interested in doing this. So, we had a plenary meeting that we called in 1991, two years later. We had over 80 organizations attend in Paris. At that meeting, there was a lot of discussion.

Q: You were chairing it?

BROWN: I chaired the meeting. We had an Ambassador from France give the keynote. Unfortunately, he gave the keynote in English, because we didn't want to translate, and the French delegation left. They were insulted. He apologized to them at the beginning in French. But he did do it.

Q: That's incredible.

BROWN: It turned out the number one objector to this from the French delegation, who came by later to talk to me, had a Masters Degree from John Hopkins and he spoke English as good as any body and didn't have the slightest trace of an accent, but he still was objected to it. At that meeting there was a small little group of people led by Oxfam

and it included the Australian AID person, the Italy AID person, and Canadian CIDA. They wanted a common data base. They did not want to have individual agreements. They said, “USAID can sit down and have 60 agreements with different organizations, Oxfam is too small for that. If we had to implement 60 exchange agreements we'd go crazy. We want out of that. We want a common data base.” Well, common data bases have been tried for years, and years, and years. One of the people I admired the most when I first started in the AID was a man named Lou Shapiro who came out of UNDP who tried to do this. Every time they tried to develop a common base it failed. Organizations didn't want to submit their information to them. Nothing ever happened. When I talked about that as a possibility at the first meeting that we had in Paris of 1989, everyone just laughed and said, “It's not going to work.” I said, “I'm not going to push it, let's see.” So, at the meeting in Paris that came up the first morning. Meantime, we had of our little working groups and we worked on everything. We identified a 20 common data elements that every agency had.

Q: What kind of data are we talking about?

BROWN: Talking about project activities. Common activities.

Q: Project documents, evaluations, designs?

BROWN: Right. Same things that we carry. Everybody had a title. It may be in French or in Spanish, but everybody had a title. They all had a number of a project or an activity number. They all had dates. They all money associated with it. Those things were easy to capture in a common format. That went through very quickly. The only obstacle we had was trying to identifying sectors and sector codes and also to try to come up with institutional names, because people had different names for the World Bank and the names were hard. Geographical aggregations were difficult. Was Morocco in Africa or the Near East? Everybody had them in different places. Even in AID we had a Near East Asia Bureau, so that was hard. But, Oxfam and Canadian CIDA in particular kept pushing

and pushing and pushing. By the last day, there was a total split in the group of 80 some people.

At the last meeting that we were having in the morning it was clear that we weren't going to agree on anything. I said, “Let's take a coffee break.” I pulled together my little group from 1989 from the steering committee and I said, “Do you want to push a common format, a common data base?” By this time, we already had CD ROMS out and we knew that we could do it. There was a woman from a group called Accis, which was the coordinating committee for information systems out of Geneva for all the U.N. agencies. She had all 35 specialized agencies data in a directory. She said, “I can convert that to a CD ROM in your format in 24 hours.” So, we talked at the coffee break and the person from ILO said, “Maybe we can get a CD ROM and create a data base that way and we'll just take up what people give us and don't try to edit it, don't try to do anything.”

I said, “Well, why don't you bring it up when we go back? I'm not going to bring it up.” So, I called on her, and she said, “Well, I think we should have a CD ROM and put all this together.” I said, “No, we don't want a common data base.” And, everyone said, “Yes, that might be a good idea.” I said, “Look, I'm willing to go with the group's feelings. If you want it, we'll do that. Can we get the data?” Then, the person from Geneva said, “I can do it.” The person from the DAC said, “I can pull together all the DAC country reports, creditor reporting system base to put it in to the format that you want.” So, I automatically had all the countries and I had all the U.N. agencies on a data base. All I needed was somebody then to monitor it and create it and maintain it. IDRC said that they would be willing to do it and everybody in the room said that would be acceptable to them. I said, “Then I needed to get five or 10 thousand dollars from all the people to get some money so that we would have contractors who could do it up in Ottawa.” We got pledges of close to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars at that meeting from the organizations and the group was created. The data base got created with the understanding that if you want to put something in, it goes in. If you don't want to put it in, don't worry about it. If you don't have a particular data element, it's blank, that's all. We're not going to edit it. Whatever you give us goes in.

There'll be duplicates, because different organizations may have the same, may work on the same project. They both have it in their data bases.

Q: What are the common elements that enabled you to find something in the data base?

BROWN: You can still do searches by titles. You can go do searches of the abstracts of the documents.

Q: These are all abstracts of the projects?

BROWN: Yes, right. So, you can still find information about it. It kept building and building to a point where's there is now about 170,000 projects on this data base, representing everybody. What happened was, the World Bank - the first time we sent out a CD ROM, World Bank came to me and said, that they didn't like the representation of World Bank projects, there weren't enough. I said, “Oh, we took it from Geneva, because you submit this to the group in Geneva.” “Oh, we don't give them everything.” I said, “Well, I don't know. We have no way of knowing anything else. You want to give it to us yourself?” They said, “Sure.” So, they went up, they sent a group of people up to Ottawa and they worked out how they were going to put it in the format and the World Bank from then on sent their information directly to Ottawa instead of going through the Geneva group, because they were embarrassed that there weren't many World Bank projects on this data base. So, it kept building and the membership kept expanding, the steering committee got bigger and bigger. We added the German government, we added a couple of NGO's to it and has been very successful.

Q: What's it called?

BROWN: In '93 we met again. Some people were complaining that it should have a name, because they couldn't get travel money to go to some informal study group. So we gave it a name and it was called INDIX, which stood for International Network for Development

Information Exchange, it's INDIX. It's still run out of the group in IDRC in Canada. I don't know what's happened since I've left, I don't know who the Chairman is any more.

Q: Who has access to this?

BROWN: All the countries, all the organizations that submit the material get it free. They get the CD ROMs sent to them.

Q: Do they buy the CD ROMs or do they get it free?

BROWN: They get it free, because they have submitted the data. Other CD ROMs are sold. LDC's who ask for it get it free. A lot of them use this. A lot of research institutions use it. A lot of NGO's —

Q: They can buy it?

BROWN: Research institutions have to buy it.

Q: What's the price of it?

BROWN: I think it was 250 dollars. It wasn't a lot of money. It's also been put on the Internet. It's available to anybody on the Internet for a fee. If they subscribe they can pay for the subscription and they can get on the Internet.

Q: So, it's self financing?

BROWN: In a way yes, but there's not enough to be self financing. What's happened is, this past year they ran out of money. The decision was to see if we could get somebody to provide a grant to it and we decided not to keep asking the governments for 10,000 dollars each. And, I ran out and I did a little marketing. The Rockefeller Foundation said that they would give us a couple hundred thousand dollars, which would finance us for another year until we were able to get better sales and things to keep it going. At the last meeting of

the Rockefeller Foundation in October it was turned down. It was turned down, because they felt, why should USAID and the World Bank and UNDP come to the Rockefeller Foundation for money. If it's good with organizations like this, you know, World Bank could finance it out of petty cash. So, they turned it down and I don't know what's happened since. There was enough money to take them until this Spring and at that point something has to be done. They don't even have a Chairman anymore, because they haven't even had a meeting. I was told this week, actually yesterday, by Lee White that they are going to have a meeting in June in New York and I'll probably be asked to go up there and see if we can come up with some idea of marketing this. But, it could end up dying and yet, I look at this as the best thing that I've ever been able to do. To pull a hundred organizations together and get them to agree and to meet every couple of years and discuss these kinds of problems. If I need information from Swedish CIDA or NORAD or Dutch Aid we had contacts in all these places that we could call. We at one time had a request from somewhere in Africa. They wanted to know something that Sweden was doing in a project and we were able tcall our contact in SIDA, and have them send the information out.

Q: How does this relate to the effort of the DAC group to create the evaluation data base?

BROWN: The evaluation data base was supposed to be a subset.

Q: It was running by CIDA, I believe.

BROWN: It was run by Canadian CIDA and we've talked with Canadian CIDA and where we left it last summer was that they were also going to go on the Internet with that. I think they're not going to be able to do it, because there's too many problems with countries not wanting to share a lot of the evaluations. But, they were agreeable to working out an arrangement to put that as a subset of the INDIX data base, so the evaluation data base would be part of that. There are others. When the Chief of Staff of AID went to WHO for a meeting, he came to me and asked me if I could tell him how many projects on HIV/AIDS were being done by non W.H.O. donors. We used INDIX to do this.

Q: Was this INDIX on a completed project or ongoing project?

BROWN: No, ongoing projects.

Q: As well?

BROWN: As well. Focuses on ongoing projects. Some of the agencies haven't given us the old completed projects. And now, INDIX is doing more work, one on one with UNICEF who agreed to sending their information directly instead of through Geneva. So, there is more one to one contact with these agencies so we are now able to get historical information easier. When the chief of staff wanted to know all the projects, we pulled 670 projects out of the data base that were not WHO projects. The next day, he had to leave for Geneva. We had it to him that morning and he took it to Geneva, took it to WHO, put it on the table and used it at the meeting and WHO was so surprised to see all the countries that have projects. Where did you get this information and eventually they called Ottawa and asked them if they could have a download of all of those HIV projects directly. Ottawa then sent it to WHO. WHO then created a new HIV/AIDS data base that incorporated their projects, as well as the others with additional data, sent it to Ottawa and it got put on as another subset INDIX. It's just like a domino effect. It just keeps building. Somebody knows you have it, they want to add something to it. With communications the way they are now, when we have committee meetings they are done electronically. They're all done on the Internet. So, when you have a group of three or four people working on something like trying to get the geographic designations, instead of having to meet in one city and have everybody try to do that, we can meet electronically. A lot of it is done electronically.

There's another group now, I guess funded originally by the Rockefeller Foundation called Bellanet which is a network of donors at the highest level, the Administrators of the agencies, enabling them through the Internet, again, to communicate with one another about their plans and their thoughts that could be shared by everyone, not just picking up a telephone and calling the head of CIDA but, the head of AID could then let everybody

know. It was founded in Belagio through the Rockefeller Foundation. That's where they had their initial meetings. Belanet came out of their thing calling it Bellanet. The Executive Secretary of Bellenet is at IDRC as well and he's closely connected with us through INDIX and now he's on the steering committee. So, now we're working more closely with Bellenet to tie in the heads of the agencies, as well as the people at the documentation level so that both of those will be working together. There's a lot of inter donor coordination that's going and it's more and more important, because the agency people want to know more about what other agencies are doing than they really care about historical information about AID.

Q: Where do the developing countries come in to this picture? How is the information helpful to the net?

BROWN: The plan was to have seminars in the developing countries where we could get the research institutions and government institutions attend this to show how they could use this information mainly in their planning process. The Ministries of Planning would be using information about what's going on and that they would be able to provide valuable information on their feelings about the projects, as well as to the Internet data base or the INDIX data base.

Q: Did any developing country have involvement in any of this that you know of? Do you work with these countries?

BROWN: They have organizations such as PADIS, a U.N. group in Ethiopia that provides information services. They're active in it. The banks, like the Africa Development Bank come to all the meetings; the Asia Development Bank come to the meetings.

Q: What I'm talking about is the developing countries themselves?

BROWN: The countries themselves, except for the one — I did some work last year at a conference up in Toronto, World Bank Conference with Ethiopia to see whether its ministry would be able to tie in to it. But, we just had an initial conversation, we were never able to

figure out how this could get done. Our hope was to do training programs in each of the regions. We had set up a training program in the Far East for this year. The Rockefeller Foundation was going to fund and the Ford Foundation was offering to fund, but then I left and there was nobody to carry it out.

Q: What was the Leland Net?

BROWN: Leland No, they don't do that. They work one on one with the individual country institutions through the Africa Bureau, a very specific U.S. initiative.

Q: To do?

BROWN: To get those organizations to understand how they can use telecommunications, but not through INDIX. INDIX would be a possible resource.

Q: Connected more into the information system of development information?

BROWN: No. It wouldn't be part of AID's developmental information program at all. It would just be using those other resources.

Q: Generally?

BROWN: Right.

Q: So this was a major gap?

BROWN: Well, it's a major gap and if nobody continues this, it drops out because I've left. I called all the meetings and I made sure that everything got done. Canadians executed it, IDRC executed it, but I was the one that they called before they even decided to send out a brochure. I edited it and I told them what they should be doing. Now I've gone and they're floundering. They're not sure what to do next. You know, take maybe a little

initiative on my part to try that and I'm not prepared yet to do that, but if they do have a meeting in June, I'd like to go there even if at my own expense to talk to them.

Q: Well, are there other dimensions of your work on development information in AID? How did you find AID as a place to work in doing this work?

BROWN: I found it frustrating. Until the last two or three years, maybe five or six years, there was little that people really cared about.

Q: What do you think brought the change in it?

BROWN: Computers, new technology, Internet.

Q: Ease of use?

BROWN: Ease of use. A new group of people who have come out of college knowing how to use computers, who rely on computers and information for everything. I don't think they can add two numbers together without using a computer anymore.

Q: People talk about the technology explosion and that's part of this?

BROWN: It's part of it, yes. But, you're going to find it with people under 35 years of age. I dealt with people who didn't have the benefit of scholastic training or using it in their life. They didn't use it in their home, they didn't really care about it. They're saying give me the hard copy and that was the mentality of what we've dealt with. So, it was very difficult, it was very frustrating for me to get resources. I mean I spent probably 80 percent of my career in CDIE at least, trying to get resources and the other 20 percent trying to protect the resources that I did have. Because, the other problem in the AID was that everybody wanted to dissolve my office in the past. They always wanted to move it. Move it here, move it there, without taking the time to understand what it did, because it dealt with computers it should be an IRM office, so put it in to the computer office. Just because it uses computers doesn't mean that they can do that. So, I spent an awful lot of time just

defending us and it was almost like a cancer that would be in remission for a year or two then there would be a recurrence. Then, all of a sudden it was a new office that wants you, a new D.A.A. or a new A.A. that comes in who says this doesn't look right, let's move that over here, very, very upsetting. It's probably one of the things that precipitated my decision to retire. I just got so tired of having it happen year after year.

Q: Why is this? Because people don't understand the role of development information?

BROWN: They'd never bother to understand its role.

Q: You had an evaluation of CDIE when John Ericksson was there, do you remember that?

BROWN: All the evaluations have been very positive.

Q: And this was one of them?

BROWN: Yes, through the Senate. We had the highest marks of all on that. There wasn't one negative thing. One member of the evaluation team was concerned, how was it that you was able to get so many resources when the agency doesn't have them and why is it with the agency resources dropping, the DI resources are going up. He was very concerned about that. I didn't know how to answer him. We have a service that people want, they pay for it and they're willing to pay money. Bureaus now in the last two years, they put in money for two years. They put money for as far ahead as they can so if there's a budget cut they're not going to be affected by it. They sit down at the very beginning when they first start doing their budget work and say how much is it you're going to need next year or the year after that and they put that in first. That's like rent. It's like your mortgage payment when you sit down and do your home budget. These are the fixed costs that we have and CDIE —

Q: Their finance is so critical.

BROWN: Yes. I don't know. Is it because they have people working there and they're buying people? Is it because they value the work so much? Is it because they know that they're not going to be able to get it another way? I don't know what their reasons are. All I know is that we except for the Research and Development Bureau, Global Bureau now, never have any questions that come up that showed that they may back out. Global Bureau backs out every year, every year. They say, they're not sure. They have their own contractors that have information. See, that's another problem in the agency. There's probably a hundred contractors who are dealing in information services in the agency. They're all little groups. John's Hopkins has a Pop Program that is run out of Baltimore. You have programs that are run out of all the Global Bureau technical offices through projects. They all deal with information. In the past, we used to have all these specialized libraries at Michigan State and the Arid Land Center in the University of Arizona, the non formal Education Center up in Michigan State, all over the place. Rhode Island had a fishery center. They still have a lot of these and there's a possibility that there's duplication in what they do. The Global Bureau, since they fund a great many of these, feel why should we pay a fee to you, you're not paying a fee to us. If you get information from one of our technical information centers, there should be a quid pro quo. Two years ago when they told us they weren't going to pay the fee, I had to close the library to them. I said, “Starting tomorrow, the Global Bureau will not be welcome to have their contractors and their direct hire staff come downstairs to the library in Rosslyn.” I had a phone call that night from the Deputy Assistant Administrator who asked me to come by the next day to have lunch with her and with John Ericksson. We sat down and she said, “What are you doing?” I said, “Well, if you don't feel that the services are worth paying for, then you don't have to use them and if you feel they are worth it, then you have to give us the money.” So, by the end of the day we had the fee. She didn't like it. She considered it blackmail, but obviously, her staff complained to her they needed it. Well, if they need it, then they should pay the same as the rest of the agencies. I don't get it for nothing. I have to pay for it. I don't make a profit. I'm not making any money on this, I'm just looking to recover my cost. So, that's the frustrating part when I have to deal with people who don't understand

that it cost money, that this is not a free commodity. You pay AOL 20 dollars a month or whatever it is to use it. It's not free.

So, that's been a frustrating part. I've had I've had people like, you can edit this out if you want, Larry Byrne, who came in and didn't like what we did and the entire time he was here, looked to move us out. That's all he cared about was moving us or dissolving us. He fought with our whole office, not just our side, but the evaluation side as well. It was very frustrating, it was very morale deflating, because the whole agency was getting this, not just me or my office. The whole agency felt that way. Over the last four or five years there's been such a decline in morale, because of this kind of attitude. It was not a collegial attitude, it was a very adversary attitude that the agency has had and that's very upsetting when you try to work in that environment. People are not as interested in finding out stuff that they have to do, just putting in their day. I don't see the same dedication to development that I used to see in Washington. Maybe it's still out in the field, I hope it is, but I don't see it in Washington.

Q: What about the library function? Has that changed over time?

BROWN: The library function hasn't really changed that much over time, except their ability to find more outside information through the Internet has changed. But, the library function has always been limited by two things: one, lack of space to be able to put more reference materials in that could be useful, and two, location. It's in Rosslyn or was in Rosslyn. The agency was in the State Department. The basic agency was in the State Department. They're not coming across the river to use the library, but use it on the telephone. It was not the kind of library where the employees felt that they could just go down, browse, find material that could be helpful, ask questions and use it as part of their work. It's always been mislocated. It's mislocated now even worse in the Reagan Building. It is in an area you have to walk through the garage to try to find it. I couldn't find it the one day I tried to see it this year. It's way down on the mezzanine.They wouldn't put it with the rest of the agency. So, I don't know if it's going to be used anymore down there, except

for the people who want to read the New York Times, but even the New York Times is available on the Internet. People sit on the Internet and read the paper so they don't have to go to the library. I'm really nervous about what's going to happen to the library, because it's still mislocated. It's still going to be needing a person who can promote it and get the agency to understand it. I was trying before I left to get them to sponsor brown bag lunches, to sponsor speakers to come in that they could advertise in the agency to get people to come down. Once they're down there and they see how to find it they might come down again. It's very nice down there. It's nicer than the cubicles upstairs. I think a lot of people would do work down in that library if they knew how to find it. So, I'm hoping that that might change, but again it needs a person, a very active person who's going to make sure that these things get done. That they have these Open Houses and they have events.

Q: What about other donors? Did this information function unique to AID or is it common to other donors or not?

BROWN: It's unique, to AID.

Q: Why is that?

BROWN: The combination of what we have in the CDIE is unique to AID. Their organization and to put information and evaluation together, even though a lot of evaluation staff people from other donors come to me and say, “How do we get our evaluations utilized? How do we promote our evaluations?” Well, one of the answers is to create an outreach facility, but they don't want to do that. So, I haven't found an agency yet —

Q: World Bank or anybody else?

BROWN: No, No. A lot of them will have information —

Q: What about CIDA in Canada, do they?

BROWN: No, no, very, very bad. IDRC has a little bit of it, but they're a different kind of organization.

Q: It's a research.

BROWN: Yeah, it's a research group. So, individual donors, I don't know of any. JICA tried to do something like that, but they weren't able to do it either.

Q: Why did they all have such a problem with it?

BROWN: It needs some kind of creative mind to get them to see how it can be done successfully. When I was up in Denmark, they said, “Well, we just don't have enough staff to create something like this.” I said, “Well, do you have a budget?” They said, “Yes, we have a big budget.” I said, “Well, you don't need to have your own staff. You can have a contractor come in and do this work.” “Yes, but who's going to write the scope of work? Who's going to choose the contract? Who's going to manage it?” So, they immediately start throwing out all the reasons why they can't do anything just like they did in my INDIX group in 1989. Thirty reasons why this isn't going to work. Well, it worked. But, somebody had to keep pushing it and they don't have people on their staffs to do that.

Q: What is your impression of people using evaluation information? Has that changed? Are people learning from their experience?

BROWN: I would hope so. I don't know. We have a lot of repeat users, which means they must have got something useful. Whether they designed a better project because of this, I really can't tell. I've never seen documented feedback that said, because of you, I designed a better project. I would like to think that happened, but I don't know a way to prove it.

Q: So, the whole question of the actual use of information is still very hard to get at?

BROWN: It's anecdotal. I mean, I can give examples and make it sound really successful if I wanted to be a salesman. I can show how the Chief of Staff went through Geneva with his projects and give examples like that. I can give examples of individual feedback that we got saying that the information we sent was very useful. They took it to their ministry and the ministry liked it and they're going to implement the project because we proved that something like that had been done before or we showed that something like that had been done before and was successful. But, they're anecdotal. There's not enough of it for me to say, to draw conclusion that it's been worthwhile or not.

Q: What is your conclusion?

BROWN: My conclusion is my own personal one, which I feel has been worthwhile, but not necessarily because people had designed a better project, but they are communicating better amongst themselves; that they are getting technical information which is helpful to them and not experiential information necessarily, but technical information; that the office has been able to provide training and technical assistance to missions and to Washington offices that helped them get information for themselves; that in some degree we've managed to make people more self-sufficient and more aware of information resources that can be helpful to them. So, I think in that regard, yes, it has been successful.We've staffed a lot of projects like the Leland initiative which is an actual project and it's got my staff actually executing, running the project. That's a good sign. That's what we should be doing. For years, I've been trying to get DI people, research people working in the projects themselves, not just in the design, but in the execution of the projects. Panama asked us to come down to go through in the conversion of their documentation center to the Panama Government on the Panama Canal. All that information on the Panama Canal was kept by the U.S. Government. They had a huge documentation center down there and nobody knew what to do with it. They had personnel records, U.S. personnel records, and payroll records and all. Well, how much of that is useful to the Panama Government to run

the Canal? There's a lot of documents, so we were sent down there once or twice I guess to help identify documentation that could then be transferred to the Panama Government to help them put together an information center.

Q: Was this done by DI?

BROWN: Yes. And by the Panamanian Government.

Q: Through the mission?

BROWN: Well, through the mission which was supporting the conversion process. But, it worked, we didn't do anything with the mission. We just went down there and worked directly with the commission that was going to be established for the new management of the canal. Well, you know, we had to write job descriptions, and tell them how to set up a library and do that. So, those kinds of projects are things that we can do very well and more and more of that should be done, working on mission close-outs so that the documentation of the history of that mission doesn't get lost somewhere. When we left Vietnam we lost so much experience, because they threw it out. They were getting out so fast that they didn't save the information. Then, they came back and said, “Well, who cares about the development on the Mekong River?” Well, the Mekong River isn't that much different than another river somewhere else. So, the work that we do with helping a mission identify who to give their information to when they close it out, should it go to a university, should it be kept in an archive, should it become in Washington, making sure that the history of our efforts in that particular country don't go to waste. That's a role that we should be playing more and some of it we have. We have sent staff to various missions in Africa to help in the close-outs of those missions, but others don't care.

Q: What should be the role of the mission, of the field mission in terms of the development information responsibility; work with the recipient governments?

BROWN: There should be an information component of all of their strategic plans in all the sectors. We did that in Indonesia when we were able to get a TDY out there when we were able to put an information component in its environment sector of strategic plan.

Q: What did that mean by putting in?

BROWN: How to use the information, how to communicate within the field, how to communicate with their institutions within Indonesia, how to know all of the different facets, because a lot of it was technical on the environment side, but it all dealt with the use of information and how it can be useful for them.

Q: What about the role of developing the information capacity, development information capacity within the countries?

BROWN: That's hard. I don't know, I think the mission should be doing that. I don't think there's a role for CDIE except maybe advising it at the beginning. That's very tough to do. That's part of the problem with the Leland initiative is that trying to get the mission which is very short handed to have that expertise to be able to help identify those possibilities and work with them. I just don't see our missions being strong enough to do that. There's not enough staff and there's not enough of technical expertise.

Q: True, but to help the government develop it's own capability?

BROWN: We're trying to do that. We tried to do that in Ethiopia this past year and that's why we had the two ministers at the meeting in Toronto at the World Bank meeting. That was one of the major focuses at the World Bank meeting at Toronto last May, to have those ministries use the Internet to find out what all the donors are doing. But, they wanted to build up their own management information systems through the Internet and AID was supporting OECD. When it got down to implementing it, they needed money and there was no money coming from any place. The Ethiopia Mission wasn't about to do it, OECD wasn't going to do it, they didn't have any money, and AID wasn't going to do it out of

headquarters. So, it fell apart, and I think it's going to always fail, because it is not cheap to do this. There's lots of training, there's lots of infrastructure to be developed, there's working with universities to get people into the government through training programs, there's developing a national information policy, which they tried to do in Egypt. Well, most countries aren't even close to thinking about a national information policy. So, I think it would be hard. I think doing what Leland is attempting to do, which is to work, not necessarily through the mission itself, but working through various institutions that the mission identifies to build up their expertise is probably the only way that anything is going to be done. But, whether that's going to reflect a national policy or that's going to reflect a lot of individual organizations who are going to be doing their own unique work on it, I don't really know. I have a tendency to think that it's still going to be fragmentary. Universities may end up talking to one another easier within the country, research institutions may connect with other research institutions, but I don't see how it's going to tie in to the government.

Q: I was thinking of tying it in to the development information function on projects, on evaluation information and things of that sort so they would have access and make use of it?

BROWN: I guess you could do that. See, I still don't know where the mission are on all of this stuff. I still feel the missions are being run by people who are in to the individual sectors that they are working in, more so than people who care that much about the information. The only time they care about the information that gets collected is when it becomes a problem. We worked on some projects in Africa where they needed to set up an information center, because documentation was being lost and they asked us to come in and help identify or write a job description so that they could set up an information center as part of this project. But, it was only because they were running into big problems not having information in hand. Until that can be solved, I mean I think people are still much more concerned with their own individual projects. In 1968, in Vietnam, you had three or four thousand employees in the mission in Vietnam. We had 18 thousand people

in 1968 prior to the RIF. You had missions that could afford it - there was an education office, a pop office, it had everything. Not one education officer and one health officer, but a whole health office. When you're talking about a mission with a mission director or a program officer, and general development specialist, and the secretary and a bunch of local hires, who's going to do that? I just don't see the agency expanding in that kind of way that they're able to do that, it's too small.

Q: Could you conceive of the new role for a mission would be as an information center?

BROWN: Well, I would like to see a lot of that happen.

Q: Become the sort of information resource link as a way of promoting development information, on U.S. experience or whatever?

BROWN: Coordinating development. Right, and if they didn't, lots of papers and suggestions about how AID should be structured in the future. One of the things is to use intermediaries to actually implement all of your projects and do all of this work and then the AID's staff would be more of a coordinator. It would be more interesting in how to share this information that is being done and let the NGO or the contractor who is doing it do that kind of work and get AID out of that business. But, AID would still be in the programming business, I think. And, that's still going to require resources in the mission to do the programming work and you'd still need a different type of person. Maybe do that on a regional basis. Maybe you would do that in certain missions to start with. Maybe you do one in Nairobi and you do one in Abidjan and do one in some central location; maybe do one in Warsaw or Moscow for the eastern European block, and try it. That'one of the things I wanted to do was to see if we could set up an information center in Prague or Warsaw or Moscow, to do the same thing we did in Guatemala for Eastern Europe. I wanted to do the same thing in Nairobi, but we were just never able to sell it to get it through. I do see the mission as having a role - we're in a new world. The world is so much different now and even the money. Not just AID. One of the problems INDIX had

and the reason I didn't go out and look for money from all of these agencies, was that these agencies are being cut back severely. Their programs are being questioned. Their programs by their legislators are all being questioned. So, there's cutbacks. IDRC has ben cut back tremendously; CIDA has been cut back; O.E.C.D. Development Center has been chopped out. I mean U.S. withdrew from the O.E.C.D. Development Center and so there's nothing left there now. There's one person left in the information office, everybody else has been fired because of funding. The U.N. agencies are all having the same problem because of dues and payments and more and more people are starting to look at, as CIDA does, whether or not we're getting our money's worth. They're starting to look at performance.

Q: Results, that they talk about.

BROWN: Results. They all talk about results, but the thing is thedon't know how to identify what these results should be or what should be accomplished or where they are, because there are so many constituencies that the results that they want to portray are different for different people. Congress wants to hear one type of result, but the private sector wants to hear a different type of result and educational institutions want to hear a different type of result, so it's not easy, but they all feel that they are spending money and they don't know if they're getting value out of it. So, I think the whole - it's frustrating when you have an INDIX meeting even, to hear of these people talk about what's happening to their agencies and what's happening to their programs and how their programs are being cut back. I don't know what this means. Does this mean that the developed world now is just sitting back saying, we've got enough problems at home; we can't keep doing this anymore; we don't see the results of what we've done. The Marshall Plan started out reconstructing a particular part, what have we reconstructed and what is it we want to see reconstructed? I don't know if that's the problem or the problem is that the economies are so bad now that, except for the U.S. economy, the other ones are all having problems, that they just don't have the resources to keep doing that or if you have enough conservative people who feel let them do it themselves now. Is it time that we pull out and see if they can do it?

It's the same reason that I can't tell you why the number of requests have dropped in DI had the same problem in understanding what's happening in the world with development assistance. I just don't know where it's going and where it's going to end up here. I don't even know what's going to happen to the U.N.

Q: Is there any other dimension of your career that you want to mention?

BROWN: God, I don't know. I have talked for so long here.

Q: You can come back to it and add to it later, obviously.

BROWN: I've covered a lot. The main thing I wanted to cover was INDIX, because I really thought the INDIX group was where things should be going. You see, the other thing I wanted to see in INDIX this year, which I thought I was getting funded out of Rockefeller for, was to create a research unit like the AED unit within INDIX, sitting up in Canada, so that all the countries, all the organizations, including the developing countries could write to them and get reference materials from them or referrals from them and it would be a central referral organization that would be able to provide consulting services to them, as well as analytical and research services and help people. That's where I was headed. If I had worked another two or three years that's where I was going to go. I would have raised the money myself, I know I could have got the money myself. Can't do it now, I'm out of it, you know. I'm not even -

Q: Maybe, maybe not.

BROWN: I served as Head of INDIX because I represented the United States Agency for International Development. I had clout in my name and my signature. When I wrote to the World Bank, when I wrote to the head of UNDP, when I wrote to the Secretary General, I had USAID and INDIX both on there. Well, I'm not that any more.

Q: But, you found that AID had clout?

BROWN: Yes, we had a lot of clout. When I gave in to their understanding, when I gave in to the common data base in Paris at that big plenary meeting, the representative from WHO got up and said, “I'm glad to see the United States is able to take a defeat like this and be flexible.” And, that's how, he believed that the U.S. was beaten in this. He was from some eastern African country, I don't know which one. Sudan, I think he was from. But, he thought I lost and that was - he was so happy about that. And, I just said, “United States believes in democracy. We believe that if the majority wants this we do that and I'm not here to tell you what the U.S. wants, I'm here to go with what you want. I'm only chairing the meeting, I'm not running the meeting.” Afterwards, several people came over, including the guy from UNDP and said, “This is one of the best three-day meetings we have ever had.” Everything was very informal. I didn't know how to run an international meeting. But yet, there are people there, because I'm from the U.S. and because I'm from AID, but still think of it in a very formal kind of structured way. You had that when you had your evaluation group. To me, I like to have a meeting where we just sit down on first names and we just chat and do things. The CIDA representative was mad at me the first day because I didn't call on him. I said, “What do you mean, call on you, I didn't know you wanted — he said, “my name card was this way.” I said, “Yes, so?” He said, “Well, in the meetings if you put your name card up like that you want to be recognized.” I said, “I would have recognized you, but I didn't know you wanted to talk.”

Q: You kept it informal, right?

BROWN: I had to scold a guy for talking to somebody while somebody else was talking. I said, “Excuse me, did you want us all to hear what you are talking about or did you want to keep that to yourself?” He was very insulted. Afterwards he said, “That was not nice.” I said, “It wasn't nice that you were talking. Somebody else was talking and I wanted to hear them and there you were having a conversation with somebody.” So, that was like a school teacher, as well, but it was still-

Q: A great experience?

BROWN: A great experience.

Q: Well, that's a good note to end on.

BROWN: Yes. I think I covered everything I wanted to say to you.

Q: Well, thank you very much. Good interview.

BROWN: Thank you.

End of interview